

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

An article written from a Christian Scientist's viewpoint

Law has its origin in God, and good human laws reflect God's government. But human laws are not God's law. Civil disobedience comes into the question when an individual feels that a law of the land conflicts with his sense of the moral law. This is a matter of conscience. The answer can only be found by turning unreservedly to God. And whatever action is taken must be taken under total, selfless obedience to God.

Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, writes, "Let us respect the rights of conscience and the liberty of the sons of God, so letting our 'moderation be known to all men'" ("Unity of Good," p. 5).

There is a wonderfully moderate, wise piece of advice in the Bible story of Jesus' apostles, Peter and John. They were brought before the council of priests for preaching about Jesus. It was not their first arrest for this offense. They might well have been classed disturbers of the peace. The lawyer Gamaliel spoke for all ages: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38, 39).

Just recently in the United States, Dr. Daniel Ellsberg has acknowledged that he gave the so-called Pentagon papers to the New York Times against U.S. security regulations. In the flurry of human opinions that rage round the necessity or appropriateness of his action, it is well to remember Christ Jesus' admonition: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). Anger and moral indignation only add fuel to an already heated atmosphere. And violent partisanship has not been known to help restore a rational calm.

But prayer will help.

And prayer that is honest enough and humble enough to lay aside personal judgments on human laws and actions and to acknowledge God's ability to judge all matters rightly will help the situation most.

The Bible is full of references to the goodness, the power, the ever-presence, and the infinite rightness of God, divine Mind. The prayerful recognition that God is in full control of His universe will help to still fears that law is going to be abrogated by civil disobedience. Prayer can remove a sense of helplessness.

that God's law is inviolate, that nothing can defy it or oppose it.

When each of us acts according to his highest understanding of God's justice, we do not have to make moral judgments on our fellowmen. We can know, rather, that men and the governments of men, with all their apparent weaknesses and inequalities, are indeed subject to divine law, for God is the source of all true law, all true government. And we can know with assurance that obedience to God's law will annul any deficiencies that may be inherent in civil laws or ordinances, or in human judgment.

God is Love, and in Love's perfect control there is no credibility gap, no civil disobedience, no disparity.

To the proportion that we recognize the all-inclusive government of divine Love, we will see its perfection manifested in our national affairs and in our personal lives.

Notes—

In reading these daily metaphysical articles, in the C.S. Monitor this article for the past 40 yrs. + this article is the only one in which the name of one connected with subject has ever appeared.

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In her "Miscellaneous Writings" Mrs. Eddy says (p. 258), "In divine Science, God is One and All; and, governing Himself, He governs the universe.